

Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
FY12 Operating Budget Testimony before the Montgomery County Council
April 5, 2011
Patricia Gallalee, Chair | Charlie Crawford, Vice-Chair

Good evening, my name is Patricia Gallalee and I am speaking on behalf of the Commission on People with Disabilities. We recognize the County's fiscal crisis and know that tough decisions are going to be made. This may be the right time to rethink how long term care services are provided, and to whom. This may also be the time to do more "means" testing so that the most needy are served, and those that have the ability to pay are required to do so. As you eliminate staff positions, and while funds may be short, the demand for services is growing, and will continue to grow. I am concerned about the adverse impact on employees whose workloads have dramatically increased and at the same time you are decreasing employee benefits. I foresee your most talented employees leaving to take better positions.

Please allow me to offer a few recommendations from the Commission which we believe will assist you with your difficult deliberations.

- 1) To provide for greater service integration, we recommend a single point of entry with a single intake application that asks the right questions so that if people are eligible for federal or state funding they are referred to those programs and County dollars are only used until they obtain those benefits.
- 2) Medicaid Waivers are a main source of funding for people with significant disabilities. The Medicaid waiting lists for children with severe disabilities is long and the County needs to fund these children for emergency support services and staff to assist them until they come off the waiting list. Another problem is that those who do not qualify for Medicaid but who are the working poor are mostly left out of needed services. Prevention and case management for those not in crisis or needed protective services has been vanishing forcing people to go into crisis to receive services. We ask that the department develop a plan to address the needs of those who may just need some assistance before they are forced into a crisis.
- 3) We want to thank the Executive for maintaining respite and the additional Call 'N' Ride coupon book. We ask you to support the Executives Budget but with these recommendations.
 - We support InterACC- DD's request to reduce the 5% cut to 3%. The 5% cut did not take into account the 2% increased costs of new consumers which would create a defacto 7% cut. Hence a real 3% cut is what can be absorbed.
 - Increase AP1-10 supported employment contracts that go to non-profits that employ people with disabilities to do work for the county.
 - As revenues increase, add the money back into the In-Home Aide Services Program.
 - We also ask that you restore service and funding, or at least not impose further cuts in services and funding to the Montgomery County Public Libraries. Libraries are a vital resource to residents who have disabilities, particularly in terms of employment readiness and employment opportunities. Libraries not only provide job skills and literacy training, but also offer employment and volunteer opportunities (work experience) for people with disabilities. The libraries are already operating on a severely reduced budget from cuts over the past three years, which have already forced libraries to reduce their hours and staff, as well as give up services, such as the Talking Books Collection, for people who have visual impairments and learning disabilities.

- 4) While we applaud the enhanced funding for Ride On, it is essential that MetroAccess be fully maintained and improved. The State has the contract for Metro Access but we believe the County must take some responsibility to ensure that safe and satisfactory service be provided to those residents of Montgomery County who are so dependent on this service. We have tentatively supported the increased cost of MetroAccess, but we must have improved service in return. There is a strong connection between the availability of a reliable transportation system to the ability of persons with disabilities being able to get to and from work so their dependency on other financial assistance is diminished.

As noted above, the full provision of fairly distributed services for persons with disabilities must be a priority of Montgomery County in FY12. Montgomery County must do better for its citizens with disabilities. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you.

“A Community’s Budgetary Choices and Policies Reflect its Values”